

COMING TO YOUR SENSES



Smell, touch, and recognition again combine to learn about the environment. Coming to Your Senses is a fun, easy, and inexpensive activity in which almost anyone can participate and do well. Participants will remember this activity every time they use hand lotion, at least for a while. It will boost their appreciation of their amazing body and help build balance confidence. Participants will need to pay attention to senses other than sight to learn about hand lotions.

Benefits »

- ◎ Encourages listening to the body (proprioceptive learning).
- ◎ Engages senses of touch, pressure, temperature, and smell.
- ◎ Encourages recall and recognition.

Set It Up »

Bring to class three or four scented hand lotions with easy-to-identify one-scent fragrances; also pick one unscented lotion. Do not let participants see the bottles or the lotion; sometimes seeing the color of lotion will give away its scent.

How to Do It »

Begin the activity with a brief discussion about smells. What smells do they remember from childhood? Fresh bread? Hay? Farm smells? Mom's perfume or Dad's cologne? (I remember the smell of my mom's scarf and her leather purse.) If participants smelled these scents again, they'd still probably recognize them accurately and immediately, even all these years later. Of all the senses, smell has the most accurate and long-term memory.

- ◎ Participants should be comfortably seated. Tell them you'll be giving them lotions to rub into their hands. If they have an aversion to scents, they may wish to sit out this activity.
- ◎ Tell them that this activity is about learning without eyes. Ask them to please close their eyes and keep them closed until the end. It won't take long.
- ◎ Give each participant a small dollop of lotion. Mix up the scents from person to person. Remind them to keep their eyes closed.
- ◎ As participants rub the lotion into their hands, use the following cues.
 - Feel the coolness of the lotion (temperature sensation).
 - Feel its softness and how it glides across the skin.
 - Feel how the skin moves, too (light touch receptors).
 - Feel the length of each finger and the hardness of the fingernails (light touch, texture, and pressure).
 - Feel how one hand can feel the other hand. Notice the pressure of the touch.
 - Notice the depth and the curve of your palm.
- ◎ Now, concentrate on the fragrance. Ask participants to bring their hands to their nose and take a deep, slow breath. Do they recognize the fragrance?
 - One by one, call out the names of the fragrances you have used for class. Participants can raise their hand when they recognize theirs.

- Does anyone have an unscented fragrance? They may. Remember, one lotion was unscented.
- Allow that some participants won't guess right. That's okay, it's the effort to explore with their senses that's important.
- Participants open their eyes. Did they enjoy coming to their senses? The sensory exploration of their hands?

Keep It Safe »

Perfumes bother some people or can cause allergic reactions. Ask all participants whether fragrances bother them. If anyone is sensitive to the smell of scented lotions, do not do this activity in their presence. Additionally, many older adults no longer have a keen sense of smell. People who have no sense of smell can still enjoy the other wonderful sensations of touch and coolness. Before you begin the activity, let participants know you plan to use these fragrances. They can opt out for any reason.

Live It »

The senses of the body are enjoyable and informative. This is a chance to explore somatic sensations. The human body is amazing!